

HAND to HOLD Impact on Society

Fourth Quarter 2020

Your support allows Hand to Hold to help families before, during and after NICU stays and infant loss by providing powerful resources for the whole family. Your contribution to Hand to Hold funds key initiatives to break down barriers to psychosocial support for NICU families in the Austin area and across the country.

What Your Donation Did This Quarter:

- Volunteers spent close to 500 hours making Hand to Hold parent bags for NICUs, creating scent cloths for parents, assembling stork necklaces, and hosting holiday events in the NICU.
- At Baylor University Medical Center Dallas, our Family Support Specialist hosted a Saturday game day for parents and siblings to come together, relax and create happy memories. Attendees enjoyed board games, snacks and the company of one another in a fun, supportive environment outside the NICU walls. Events like this also provide an alternative means of support for families who are unable to attend weekly support groups.
- Family Support Specialists handed out jewelry generously donated by Kendra Scott to eight NICU moms who have spent 100 days or more in the hospital to recognize their strength and resilience.

Counseling Services are Off to a Great Start!

Over a six month period, we were able to extend our support to eight NICU parents after hospital discharge. Our licensed clinical counselor enjoys working with clients who are ready to process their NICU experience and is able to witness how therapy transforms their lives and relationships. We are excited to continue this free resource for NICU families. If you are a NICU parent in the Austin area and are looking for counseling services related to your NICU experience, please visit handtohold.org/counseling to fill out a request form.

Holidays in the NICU

Spending the holidays in the NICU can be difficult for many and can lead to feelings of doubt, sadness, stress and grief. To help combat these feelings and bring joy to the season, our Family Support Specialists threw festive holiday parties in the NICU in our partner hospitals, with food, treats and personalized ornament crafts to commemorate baby's first Christmas.

"Making our twins' 'Baby's First Christmas' ornaments with Hand to Hold made things feel a little more normal," said one parent. "Celebrating milestones made our whole NICU journey special and less scary."



"I'm loving this therapy Hand to Hold offers. It's definitely helped me process my experience."

—NICU parent



The Power of Peer Support in the NICU

Forming relationships in the NICU isn't easy. Hand to Hold support groups and special events give NICU families the opportunity to socialize. They meet other families going through the same thing they are, they get to know one another, and sometimes they even become the closest of friends.

Hillary Sullivan and Vanessa Ibarra delivered their babies on the same day, under many of the same circumstances. The two women spent day after day in the NICU, unaware of each other's presence at the nearby isolette.

It was a Hand to Hold Mother's Day event that brought the two moms together. With encouragement from their nurses, the reluctant moms attended the event with their own mothers. There they sat down and began exchanging stories, and the two quickly realized that not only were their babies born on the same day, but they were actually NICU neighbors.

Hillary and Vanessa became fast friends. Since the families couldn't spend unlimited time in the NICU, they each felt comforted that the other was looking in on their baby, sending encouraging texts to let them know how they were. Now discharged, the two moms continue to stay in touch and serve as each other's support network in the days after the NICU.

Peer support programs in the NICU like Hand to Hold's give parents a safe space to share their fears, get validation on their feelings and receive the confirmation that they are not alone. While both Vanessa and Hillary received individual support from their Hand to Hold Family Support Specialist, Suzy, and the Hand to Hold in-hospital Ambassador program, it was the connections and friendships they made at support group and at the bedside that were really special.

"It was amazing to connect with someone going through the NICU experience at the same time with our babies being in the same nursery. Thursdays quickly became my favorite days because I was able to see our amazing Hand to Hold Family Support Specialist, other NICU families and my new friend."

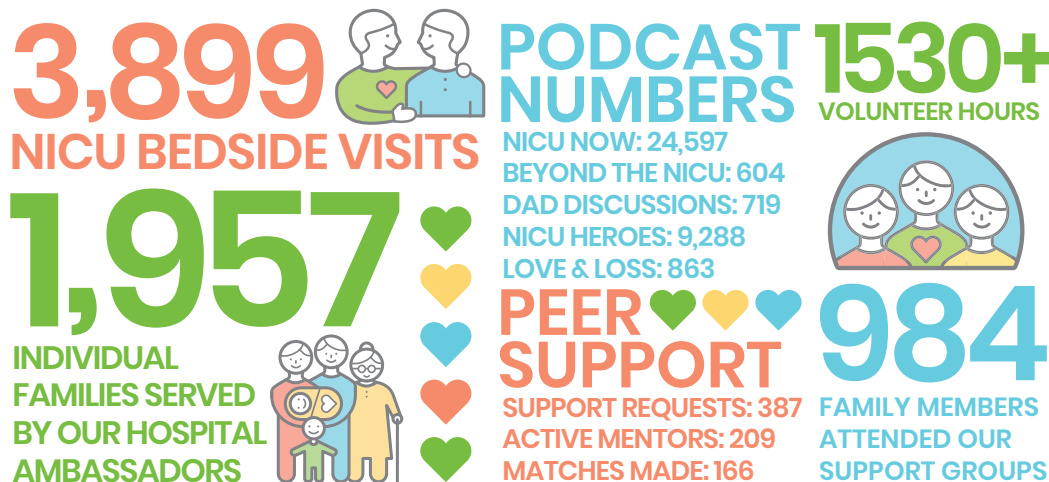
-Hillary S., NICU Mom



A Warm Welcome to Gabrielle Wiggins!

Joining Hand to Hold in October, Gabrielle is our new Family Support Specialist serving families in the NICU at St. David's North Austin Medical Center. Gabrielle is a mom of two, with her youngest being a full-term NICU baby. She had no idea how devastating and frightening walking through the difficult journey of having a baby in the NICU would be for her and her husband, Joshua. She is forever grateful for the care the entire family received, and looks forward to extending that care to other families!

Impact by the Numbers: January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019



Fragile Babies. **Family Support.**

TollFree: 855-H2H-NICU

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| handtohold.org

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